

Jr. C Bandits swept out of playoffs by Thistles

By Jake Courtepatte

It's deja-vu for the Caledon Bandits, who once again are faced with an early exit from the Ontario Junior C Lacrosse League playoffs.

They drew the Fergus Thistles in the first round after losing their final four regular season games, and finishing with a 3-13 record. As the eighth and final seed in the East division, the Bandits were matched with a 14-2 Thistles squad that hadn't lost in close to a month.

The returning Bandits were quickly reminded of their 2014 and 2015 playoff journeys, swept by the Thistles in the best-of-three first round in both years.

Needless to say, the results were very similar in 2016.

There were 125 fans who came through the door of the Mayfield Rec Complex last Tuesday evening for Game 1, where the Thistles took it to the Bandits early. Fergus's biggest offensive weapon, Hyatt Welsh, beat goaltender Jordan Roswell just more than one minute into the game.

Sam McCanna rebounded for the Bandits just less than a minute later, before three straight Fergus goals. The Thistles found the back of the net nine times in the first period.

A final score of 14-8 led to some flared tempers in the dying minutes, with Alex Freethy and Austin Heughan both receiving game misconducts for fighting majors. Colin Sinclair and McCanna both had good offensive output for the Bandits; McCanna notching three points and Sinclair four.

With an audience in the triple digits once again Thursday at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex, the Thistles were able to take the series in commanding fashion in front of a home crowd.

The Thistles threw 40 shots at the net in an eventual 15-6 win, getting ugly again with the final few minutes lousy with fighting majors.

Ethan Stannard notched a hat trick for Caledon, while Andrew Rybka, Brandon Marion and Sinclair also found twine. Stannard and Sinclair shared Caledon's scoring title through their two playoff games, with five points apiece.

It's back to the drawing board for the Bandits as they look to end a three-year first round playoff slump.

Meanwhile, the Thistles have already begun their divisional semifinal match series, taking Game 1 from the Halton Hills Bulldogs. The Wilmot Wild are facing the Six Nations Warriors, the Clarington Shamrox are taking on the Huntsville Hawks, and the Peterborough Lakers are facing the Whitby Warriors.



Colin Sinclair led the Caledon Bandits in points through two OJCLL playoff games, during a series sweep by the Fergus Thistles. Photo by Jake Courtepatte